



BEGINNINGS: A HISTORY OF THE FOUNDING OF
BAPTIST CHURCHES IN TRANSYLVANIA COUNTY, 1795-1865

By

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PREFACE

Many books have been written about Baptists in North Carolina including those which are doctrinal, historical, laudatory and condemnatory. Some reminisce while others are written upon scholarly and objective premises. Only a few treat Baptists in counties or regions of this state and none deal with them in Transylvania County. Though this thesis is written about Baptist churches in this small, but interesting, county, it is not a comprehensive attempt to bring together a narrative account of these churches and their total effect upon the county and the region. It is an attempt to chronologize this denomination during the three quarters of a century between 1787 and 1865. It will treat Baptist doctrine, growth, discipline and turmoil. Principally it will attempt to show how vital a part they played in the development of Transylvania County.

Baptists have been politically persecuted in numerous places, even in America, and in other places they have been merely tolerated. In yet others they have had a dominant influence upon social and spiritual practices. Yet, such religiously dedicated men seem to contribute much to the happiness and to the stability of their society. Their philosophy of life demonstrates a measure of sincere self-denial and a corresponding devotion of concern for others. Wherever they go, they build their churches where they communally converse with God and pay homage to Him. They

establish their homes and farms, settlements and schools, so that life may be enriched. Even non-worshippers point to the contributions of these religious participants with justifiable pride and appreciation, and feel more secure because they are there.

Though Baptists were, by no means, the only religious group who settled Transylvania County, they were always the most numerous group. They were for only a short time willing to share their houses of worship with other denominations. They always wanted and always built their own churches. They never excluded others from their services, though they often excluded them from certain phases of participation. This was especially true where the question of true believing and true baptism was concerned.

INTRODUCTION

Information specifically relative to churches within Transylvania County has been obtained from primary sources, principally from church minutes, associational records, deeds of Buncombe, Henderson, and Transylvania counties, and from markers in church cemeteries. General information relative to periodic history, to political and to social developments, and to geographic factors was gathered from secondary sources. Without the cooperation of more than one hundred individuals in the area and recourse to library materials at Wofford College, Furman University, Duke University, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Wake Forest University, the municipal libraries of Brevard and Asheville (Pack Memorial), and the library of Western Carolina University, the basic ingredients of this paper could not have been assembled. The author is grateful to all who contributed to the endeavor. He is especially grateful to those professors in the history department of Western Carolina University who guided him.

Though many individuals gave much interesting and pertinent information, unless records were available to verify such data, it was not included in this paper. Such secondary sources as were used were chosen for relevancy of interpretative or substantive relationships to the subject.

Throughout this thesis conclusions not justifiably drawn from evidence therein were not made. Trends and developments of an apparently conclusive nature were fully exploited in an attempt to make the narrative understandable and factual.

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CHAPTER I

FRONTIER CONDITIONS IN THE MOUNTAINS

Few settlers had pushed farther westward, before the last quarter of the seventeenth century, than the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains. Though DeSoto had penetrated the region in 1540 and Juan Pardo had built a fort in their midst in 1566,¹ there is little substantial evidence to indicate that frontiersmen had settled among the Cherokee before Cornelius Doherty had come as a trader in 1690.² Prior to this time the red man was sole possessor of Western North Carolina.

From the beginning, association between the two ethnic groups was cloaked with friction. On the one hand the white man looked upon the Indians as nothing more than savages. On the other hand the Indians resented the intrusion of the white man. The newcomers believed that they had to assert their control over the Indians so that they could civilize and Christianize them. The latter saw little sincerity in the white

¹Foster A. Sondley, A History of Buncombe County North Carolina (Asheville: The Advocate Publishing Company, 2 Volumes, 1930) 1, 12-13. Hereinafter cited as Sondley, A History of Buncombe County.

²William W. Stringfield, "North Carolina Cherokees," North Carolina Booklet, 111 (1903), II. Hereinafter cited as Stringfield, "North Carolina Cherokees."

man's profession of beneficence, especially when it was accompanied by violence and repression. One writer, William W. Stringfield, said of the white man's influence upon the Indians, "Under his tutelage they soon became expert horse thieves..."

Early contacts between the two peoples were concerned with trade. The method employed was barter and the medium of exchange was material. So long as such activities were mutually satisfying and profitable little friction occurred. But when chicanery and avarice were substituted, suspicion and distrust emerged.

As the products of such exchange reached the more settled coastal regions of Virginia and the Carolinas the profit therefrom induced more ambitious trading exploits further west. These ventures were not concerned with humane considerations but were propelled primarily by pecuniary motives. Under such circumstances barter was more frequently replaced by forceful extraction. Relentless and heartless pressures were brought to bear upon the Indians. They would hold their ground valiantly for a while, but those that survived were driven westward from their traditional homes. No historian has ever adequately portrayed the suffering and the bitter anguish of their retreat.

³Ibid.

In speaking of frontier conditions in the mountains, one must clearly set time limits to his considerations. In reality, there are still frontier conditions in many isolated or sequestered localities of this vast mountainous empire, some by choice and others by necessity. In this paper the author alludes to frontier conditions between 1785 and 1865. These particular years were selected because the latter year marks the point at which many changes occurred.

Those who settled Western North Carolina during the last three decades of the eighteenth century came into the region through gaps and gorges between the almost impenetrable mountains, or in canoes or flat boats up broad and often turbulent rivers. The earliest of them brought few of their possessions with them. Members of the second migration were usually wealthier than their predecessors. In either case they survived and thrived or perished according to how well they utilized resources available in the new land. To thrive or even to subsist, they had to be frugal, perceptive, and creative. They had to build their entire society around the home. Social, economic, or other institutions grew out of the home, or to satisfy the needs of the home.

These settlers built their crude homes beside streams, especially where they were bordered by flat lands. Such homes, at first, consisted of merely a single room. Eventually a shed, a spring house, a stable and

additional rooms were built. In some instances there were as many as six rooms in the house, two garrets above the two main rooms and two shed rooms or lean-tos. Logs were fitted one upon another and chinked and daubed with blocks or scraps of wood and sealed with mud. Nails were not available, so wooden pegs were used to hold their ceiling and shelving in place. Boards and shingles for the roof were split by wedges, mauls and such crude axes as they could hammer from available scraps of iron. Logs were peeled and shaped by adzes, axes and draw knives. Floors were sometimes earthen, while at other times they were made of rough strips of wood called puncheon.⁴ Windows were generally unglazed and were frequently just openings in an otherwise solid wall.⁵

Most meat was secured from the surrounding streams and woods. The forests were regarded as an obstacle to planting or as a place of refuge for Indians and wild animals; so they were recklessly felled. Huge areas were burned and animals were driven into the cleared arena to be slaughtered for their meat and pelts. When an animal was killed, it was skinned on the spot. The hunter took the hide and the best meat, leaving the refuse to rot.

⁴John Preston Arthur, Western North Carolina: A History from 1730-1913 (Asheville: Edward Buncombe Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution, 1914) 258-259. Hereinafter cited as Arthur, Western North Carolina.

⁵Ibid.

Meat was then cured by smoke and was prepared for jerky. The hides were scrapped and cured. These were then baled and placed on scaffolds so that animals could not get to them.⁶

When the men were not hunting or fishing, they cleared small patches of land where they planted their crops of cotton, corn or vegetables. These men were quite adept at making a living. Necessity required much of them and they responded vigorously. According to one writer, "They made shoes, bullets and powder, built houses, constructed tables, chairs, cupboards, harness, saddles, bridles, buckets, barrels and plough sticks. They made their own axe and hoe-handles, fashioned their own horseshoes and nails upon the anvil, burnt wood charcoal, made wagon tires, bolts, nuts, and everything that was needed on the farm."⁷

Women were as industrious as the men, but they were more closely bound to the home. While men hunted and fished, went to the militia "musters," or spent their Saturday afternoons loafing and drinking about the country "stores," their wives had very little time of their own. They arose early, stirred the red coals on the hearth and started the fire to cook breakfast. They lugged water from the spring, fed the chickens,

⁶Ibid., 254.

⁷Ibid., 255-256.

milked the cows , dressed the children , made bread and fed their families . After that they washed the dishes , and then used the spinning wheel , the loom and the reel while they watched the children . There were floors to sweep , beds to make , churning to do , sewing , darning , washing , ironing , lye to make , gardens to tend , lunches to prepare and children to get ready for bed .

The hearth was the center of the home . Before it justice was meted out to the children for their day's misdeeds . There they were taught the three R's . Yet the hearth was more than this . Over it swung pots where food was cooked . Upon the hearth bread was baked . The hearth was the symbol of family unity and of authority . In many instances no one ever retired for the evening before the entire family paused there to read the Bible and to thank God for the day's blessings . There was jollity , music , and talk . Frequently , seeds were picked from the cotton before the light of the hearth . Peanuts were roasted , corn was shelled for planting , and ears of fresh corn were roasted for an after-dinner snack . Here the doughty farmer-hunter carved axe handles and made toys for his children and utensils for the home . Here wives and older daughters made clothing . Eye hooks were driven into the ceiling of the largest room from which women dangled frames upon which they made quilts.⁸

⁸Ibid. , 270 .

The tranquillity and serenity pictured above was often interrupted. As a matter of fact, fear was as real to them as was life itself. There were frequently wrathful confrontations between Indians and the settlers. Not only did the Indian resent the white man's intrusion upon his domain, but he resented the consequent destruction of his hunting ground, and the desecration of his villages. The whites resented Indian thievery. Occasionally Indians slew invaders, though not nearly as frequently as they were slain by the whites.⁹

To this point mention has been made only of family units on the frontier. At first families were so separated by distances or by mountains that there was very little association or concerted action. When their incursion into the mountains had gone so far as to provoke the wrath of the Cherokees, the white people had to find effective ways of communication. Their initial step was to move into an area in groups of families. In such instances social fraternization led to normal community existence. Measures were taken to divide labor. Some were defenders, others were teachers, some were dispensers of medicine, which consisted of herbs mostly, and others performed further needed functions. Family visits were protracted. "Musterings" were semiannual affairs. There were log-rollings and cabin

⁹Sondley, A History of Buncombe County, I, 396.

raisings. There were quilting parties, where women and children would socialize. The banjo and the fiddle were their music instruments. The Bible and the hymn book were found in most homes and were more than symbols. The people were close to their religious institutions, wherever they existed. Where they had no church they worshipped in homes or under some wooded arbor. These were introverted people yet they always had time for a neighbor. Their home was always an inn for weary travelers.¹⁰

When distant neighbors gathered infrequently, their urge to socialize often led to unbridled excesses. Among these excesses were fighting, feats of strength or endurance, and the consumption of great quantities of alcoholic beverages. Practically all frontier social strata participated in these excesses. Sweet, in his volume on frontier Baptists, quoted one source:

Ardent spirits were used as a preventive of disease. It was also regarded as a necessary beverage. A house could not be raised, a field could not be cut down, nor could there be a log-rolling, a husking, a quilting, a wedding, or even a funeral without the aid of alcohol.¹¹

¹⁰Ibid., 428-430.

¹¹William Warren Sweet, Religion on the American Frontier, The Baptists (New York: Cooper Squire Publishers, Inc., 1964) 51-52. Herein-after cited as Sweet, Baptists.

He quoted the following passage from another source:

From my earliest recollections drinking drams, in family and social circles, was considered harmless and allowable socialities. It was almost universally the custom of preachers, in common with all others, to take drams; and if a man would not have it in his family, his harvest, his house-raising, log-rolling, wedding, and so on he was considered persimonious and unsociable, and many, even professors of Christianity, would not help a man if he did not have spirits and treat the company.¹²

Though early settlers frequently indulged in these excesses, there were times when sobriety and hard work grew out of their gathering.

Dr. Arthur C. Smith, in his A Brief History of Macon County published in 1905, said:

It was the custom in those early days not to rely for help on hired labor. In harvesting small grain crops the sickle was mostly used. When a crop was ripe the neighbors were notified and gathered in to reap and shock the crops. The manner was for a dozen or more men to cut through the field, then hang their sickles over their shoulder and bind back. The boys gathered the sheaves together and the old men shocked them up. The corn crop was usually gathered in and thrown in great heaps alongside the cribs. The neighbors were invited and whole days and into the nights were often spent in husking out a single crop. If a house or barn was to be raised the neighbors were on hand and the building soon under roof. Likewise, if a man had a heavy clearing it was no trouble to have an ample force to handle and put in heaps the heaviest logs. It was no unusual thing for a man to need one to two thousand rails for fencing. All he had to do was to proclaim that he would have a "rail mauling" on a given day and bright and early the neighbors were on the ground and the rails were made before

¹²Ibid., 261-262, 270.

sundown.... This custom of mutual aid cultivated a feeling of mutual dependence and brotherhood, and resulted in the most friendly and neighborly intercourse. Indeed, each man seemed to be on the look-out for his neighbor's comfort and welfare as well as his own. It made a community of broad-liberal-minded people who despite the tongue of gossip and an occasional fisticuff in hot blood, lived in peace and goodwill one toward another.¹³

Man could do little of a permanent nature until he labored together with other men. Only after such mutual contacts became permanent settlements, were churches, schools, or other institutions built. Only then were effective measures of government taken. Once men professed common needs they undertook to link settlements by trails over which their vehicles or animals could traverse. They undertook trading ventures and sought contact with even more distant settlements. Over these same trails came the first line of religion, the itinerant preacher-teacher. Over these trails came news from distant settlements. Once again these isolated frontiers became a real part of the total American or regional population. They had become the gate to the future and a constant link to the past. Their enthusiasm and determination set the pattern of optimistic venturesomeness for yet unborn generations. Long before 1865 most mountain coves had been entered by these people.

¹³Arthur, Western North Carolina, 273-274. (The work of Smith is not available. Arthur cited his work and listed him as Dr. A. C. Smith.)

CHAPTER II

TRANSYLVANIA BACKGROUND

The exodus of Baptists from the area comprising the Sandy Creek Association, as a result of the Regulator movement, would be a convenient place to begin concerning Western North Carolina generally and Transylvania County specifically. Yet, to set the records straight and to present a clear chronology, efforts will be made to explicitly depict developments that led to conditions and events that will be related in this paper. With reference to the effects of the Regulator movement on the development of Baptists in North Carolina, George Washington Paschal claims that the most important effect was the results effected by the persecution that drove early Christians from Jerusalem. Through this Baptist principles and establishments were pushed as far as people lived on the frontiers of Tennessee, South Carolina, Georgia and into the hitherto almost impenetrable recesses of Western North Carolina's mountains.¹ The center of the Regulator activities was in the area peopled by Separate Baptists of the Sandy Creek Association. The movement received much of its support from individual Baptists who resisted

¹George Washington Paschal, History of North Carolina Baptists: 1663-1805 (Raleigh: The General Board of North Carolina Baptists State Convention, 2 Volumes, 1930) 2, 381-382. Hereinafter cited as Paschal, North Carolina Baptists.

the forms of tyranny they thought Governor William Tryon was attempting to impose upon them. The Baptist Association advised against resistance to Tryon's forces. It put the matter to its members in these words: "If any member should join the Regulators and take up arms against the lawful authority, he should be excommunicated." Despite this warning, "Regulator Advertisement No. 9" names many Baptists and two ministers as actively participating in resistance against the established government.²

The movement of Baptists was so great that within seventeen years after the Battle of Alamance, the Sandy Creek Church, with its branches, was reduced from 606 to 14 members. These Baptists had despaired of seeing better times. Church records indicate that at least fifteen hundred Baptist families left the Sandy Creek region within those years.³

No significantly new causes lured settlers to the regions alluded to above. This movement was not originally the result of organized efforts, but was the natural result of individual enterprise. The avalanche was triggered by a few early adventurers who were followed by occasional

²Maloy A. Huggins, A History of North Carolina Baptists: 1727-1932 (Raleigh: The General Board of the North Carolina State Baptist Convention, 1967) 62. Hereinafter cited as Huggins, North Carolina Baptists.

³Ibid.

families and then by groups of families. They were drawn not only by their indefatigable curiosity and their love of adventure, but also by the availability of new land, discontent with political and economic patterns, and by the hope of advancement presented by a frontier environment.⁴

As has been mentioned above, some Baptists came to Western North Carolina from Virginia and from Pennsylvania. Others came from South Carolina, where the Charleston Baptist Association had expanded until it reached the piedmont region of that colony and on into the foothills of North Carolina. These missionary-type Baptists were Separatists. The first such church in Tennessee was formed by a group from Guilford County, North Carolina. Dr. William H. Whitsitt said that, "North Carolina might appropriately be called the Holy Land of Southern Baptists."⁵

Two writers of history, Sadie Smathers Patton and Mary Jane McCrary, relating specifically to the region now comprising Transylvania County, attempt to trace political developments from earliest colonial times to the period when the area became a county in the State of North Carolina.

⁴Robert D. W. Conner, North Carolina; Rebuilding an Ancient Commonwealth: 1584-1925 (Chicago: The American Historical Society, Inc., 4 volumes, 1929) I, 283. Hereinafter cited as Connor, Rebuilding an Ancient Commonwealth.

⁵Huggins, North Carolina Baptists, 72.

Many settlers hesitated before crossing into Western North Carolina because of various agreements with the Cherokees. Yet, no agreement could restrain the migration very long. Although hunters, trappers, and traders were in the area before the Revolutionary War, far greater numbers came afterwards. The State of North Carolina gave impetus to this movement when it made grants of land to veterans as a reward for military service. In 1778, the State stipulated that no lands within Indian boundaries should be entered, surveyed, or granted. This excluded from entry all mountain land west of the Blue Ridge between the French Broad and Nolichucky rivers.

Some veterans moved to their grants while others sold theirs and moved elsewhere. The first clear grant in what is now Transylvania County was made to William Porter on Cathey's Creek in 1783.⁶ Subsequent minutes of Cathey's Creek Church indicate that Porter was a Baptist. Local tradition claims that a family of Catheys preceded Porter to the region. In any case, it is clear that the two earliest settled regions of the county were Cathey's Creek and Davidson's River. Both were referred to in early Rutherford, Buncombe and Henderson County records. Davidson's River was frequently referred to by Methodist Bishop Francis Asbury. One

⁶Rutherford County Register of Deeds, Book 4, 42, Rutherfordton, North Carolina.

such reference states;

On Monday I parted from dear William M'Kendree. I made for Mr. Fletcher's, upon Mud Creek: he received me with great attention and the kind offer of everything in the house necessary for the comfort of man and beast. We could not be prevailed upon to tarry for the night, so we set off after dinner and he accompanied us several miles. We housed for the night at the Widow Johnson's. I was happy to find that in the space of two years, God had manifested his goodness and his power in the hearts of many upon the solitary banks and isolated glades of French Broad. Some subjects of grace there were before, amongst Methodists, Presbyterians and Baptists. On Tuesday I dined at Benjamin Davidson's, a house I had lodged and preached at two years ago. We labored along eighteen miles; eight ascent on the west side, and as many on the east side of the mountain.⁷

Throughout the three volumes of diary and letters of Bishop Asbury much mention is made of Baptists. One can learn as much about their early years from him as from anyone else. He encountered them in all parts of North Carolina throughout his twenty odd years of labor here. In one place he wrote;

On my way I saw Babel, the Baptist-Methodist house, about which there has been so much quarrelling: it is made of logs and is no great matter. I am astonished at professors, old professors, neglecting family and private prayers; Lord, help! for there is but little genuine religion in the world.⁸

⁷J. Mannin Potts, Elmer T. Clark, and Jacob S. Payton (eds.), The Journals and Letters of Francis Asbury (London: The Epworth Press, 3 Volumes, 1952) III, 367. Hereinafter cited as Asbury, Journals and Letters.

⁸Asbury, Journals and Letters, II, 2.

Another part of his diary says;

My body is weak, and so is my faith for this part of the vineyard. God is my portion, saith my soul. This country improves in cultivation, wickedness, mills, and stills; a prophet of strong drink would be acceptable to many of these people. I believe that the Methodist preachers keep clear, both by precept and example. Would to God members did so too! Lord have pity on weeping, bleeding zion!⁹

On November 7, 1800, he said of his visit to the French Broad, "My company was not agreeable here--there were too many subjects of the two great potentates of this western world--whiskey and brandy. My mind was greatly distressed."¹⁰

Between 1780 and 1850 five of the present eight townships of Transylvania were formed, indicating that stabilized social units had organized and were participating in civil life in Rutherford, Buncombe, Henderson and Jackson Counties, successively. Cathey's Creek and Boyd appeared earlier than did the others yet Eastatoe, Little River and Dunn's Rock soon followed.¹¹

⁹Ibid., 46.

¹⁰Ibid., 262.

¹¹United States Census Reports of Rutherford, Buncombe, Henderson, and Jackson Counties (State Department of Archives and History, Raleigh, North Carolina).

As settlers moved into the southwestern part of Buncombe County, and into Western South Carolina and Northeastern Georgia, little concern was evidenced, at first, about the location of State boundaries.

North Carolina claimed for her southern boundary the 35th parallel north latitude. The line of this parallel was at that time supposed to run about twelve miles north of what was subsequently ascertained to be its true location. Between this supposed line of 35 degrees north latitude and the northernmost boundary of Georgia, as settled upon by a convention between that state and South Carolina in 1787, there intervened a tract of country of about twelve miles in width, from north to south, and extending from east to west, from the top of the main ridge of mountains which divide the eastern from the western waters of the Mississippi river. This tract remains, as was supposed, within the chartered limits of South Carolina and was in the year 1787 ceded by that state to the United States, subject to the Indian right of occupancy. When the Indian title to the country therein described was ceded to the United States by the Treaty of 1798 with the Cherokees, the eastern portion of this twelve mile tract fell within the limits of such session. On its eastern extremity near the headwaters of the French Broad river, immediately at the foot of the Blue Ridge Mountains, had been located, for a number of years prior to the treaty, a settlement of about fifty families of whites, who by its ratification became occupants of the public domain of the United States, but who were outside the jurisdiction of any state. These settlers petitioned Congress to retrocede the tract of country upon which they resided to South Carolina, in order that they might be brought within the protection of the laws of that state. A resolution was reported in the House of Representatives from the committee to which the subject had been referred, favoring such a course, but Congress took no effective action on the subject, and when the state boundaries came finally to be adjusted in that region

the tract in question was found to be within the limits of North Carolina.¹²

The region where the three States joined was almost inaccessible. Consequently, it was natural that some confusion would result. Lacking State control, the region became a stronghold of renegades and other lawless adventurers. From their fastness they preyed upon neighboring communities. In December, 1803, Georgia created Walton County on the headwaters of the French Broad River in present Jackson and Transylvania Counties. When Georgia attempted to exercise her jurisdiction over the area, North Carolina resisted. For seven years this misunderstanding continued, causing great inconvenience to lawful elements of the population. Finally, in 1807 the two States agreed to a new survey to properly locate the 35th parallel. This survey party discovered, to the amazement of the Georgians, that Georgia had no legitimate claim to any part of the area. Georgia had projected herself twenty-two miles into Buncombe County. Georgia's Governor, Jared Irwin, refused to accept the results of the survey and sent militia reinforcements to assert Georgia's jurisdiction. After much dickering, North Carolina sent her own troops in 1810 to oust Georgia officials and to assert her authority. At least two

¹²Arthur, Western North Carolina, 32. (Arthur took it from The Fifth Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology: 1883-1884.)

battles occurred, the first at McGaha's Branch, where the Georgians were routed with a number of casualties and a loss of prisoners. These Georgian captives were imprisoned at Morganton. Nothing is known as to what happened to them. Those Georgians who had eluded the "Tar Heel" militia at McGaha's Branch regrouped for another try at Selicia, in Cathey's Creek District. Here they lost again. Here some men were killed--conflicting reports place the number slain at between one and fourteen. Other small skirmishes took place from time to time, resulting mostly from Georgia sympathizers resisting North Carolina authority.¹³ Thus ended Walton's War and Walton's County, at least within the confines of North Carolina. Transylvania had been a part of the State of Georgia and a misplaced settlement on public domain.

When residents of the southern part of Buncombe petitioned to become a separate county, of Henderson, there were settlers in all parts, including small settlements in some areas of what is now Transylvania. When the petition was made in 1838, an immediate conflict arose between the "road-men" and the "river-men." Their first conflict was over the location of the county seat. The former wanted it along the road that ran between Greenville, South Carolina and Asheville--where the city of

¹³Ibid., 35-36.

Hendersonville now stands. The latter wanted it placed across the French Broad between Horse Shoe and Etowah. A committee, with representatives from both groups, was appointed to determine the location. John Clayton, a "river-man," was chairman of the committee and the river site was selected. The men favoring the road would not accept the verdict. They had an injunction restraining the location of the county seat and the surveying of city lots at the site chosen. Another poll was taken and the road site was chosen. Though the county seat was built and the "road-men" had won, it was a costly victory. For twenty-five years the "river-men" claimed that it had been accomplished by fraud. During all that time they were a discontented element within the county. Time after time they tried to petition to become a separate county. Finally the "road-men" relented in 1860 and agreed to the demands of the dissident section. A petition was sent to the State Legislature, and in 1861, during turbulent times, Transylvania was born.¹⁴

¹⁴Arthur, Western North Carolina, 133-134.

CHAPTER III

THESE BAPTISTS: A PERSPECTIVE

Baptists are a free-church "sect-type" branch of the Christian community. As such they emphasize a person-to-person relationship to God. To them the individual needs no human intercessor or mediator with God. The church is composed of regenerated members whose membership is vested upon the basis of personal Christian experience. Salvation is a product of faith and grace and though members must be baptized, membership is not a result of baptism or any other sacrament.¹

Baptists contend that the local church is the principal organizational unit whereby its members are nurtured in Christian concepts and by which they hope to evangelize the world. An early Baptist, Roger Williams, stated the church's attitude towards church-state relations rather succinctly when he said, "The state is not irreligious; it is simply not religious." The idea of any form of church and state union is repugnant to Baptists. They contend that the state must not interfere with the individual's relationship to God and conversely that the church must not

¹Robert G. Torbet, A History of the Baptists (Chicago: The Judson Press, 1950) 17. Hereinafter cited as Torbet, Baptist History.

interfere with the civic duties of its members.² This locally-oriented church, with a world mission, is loosely associated with other similar bodies but is bound by no authority but God. Baptists de-emphasize conformity to formalism, liturgy, organization and creeds. They especially abhor institutionalism and priestly authority. This church is democratic, in that every member has an equal voice in the decision-making process. It requires a single standard, believer's faith, or Christian living and receives its support from voluntarism. It may be said that Baptists follow five basic principles: (1) separation of church and state, (2) conversion as a condition of church membership, (3) individual responsibility to God, (4) congregational church government and (5) immersion as the only scriptural form of baptism.³

Many theories have been held concerning the origin of Baptists. One of the oldest and most persistent of these is that of Apostolic Succession. Those who accept this theory contend that Baptists have existed ever since John the Baptist, the first Baptist, ministered and

²Willard Leroy Sperry, Religion in America (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1946) 18. Hereinafter cited as Sperry, Religion in America.

³George Washington Paschal, History of North Carolina Baptists: 1663-1805 (Raleigh: The General Board of North Carolina Baptist State Convention, 2 Volumes, 1930) II, 17. Hereinafter cited as Paschal, North Carolina Baptists.

baptized along the Jordan river.⁴ They explain that the early churches established in Asia Minor following the earthly ministry of Jesus were undoubtedly Baptist churches and that the first Christian church was the First Baptist Church of Jerusalem. While they believe that there is an unbroken line of Baptist churches down to this time, they readily admit that there are periods of time when continuous records of such succession have been lost. Most modern Baptists believe that attempts to prove such succession is inconsequential and that the really important thing is the succession of unbroken principles.⁵

One Baptist historian, Albert Henry Newman, has described modern Baptist kinship to early Christians in this manner: "That the apostolic churches were in all essential respects Baptist, or rather the Baptist churches are in all respects conformed to the apostolic norm, is generally admitted by impartial students of the New Testament Church policy who have taken the trouble to compare the two."⁶

⁴Torbet, Baptist History, 18.

⁵Orland Kay Armstrong and Marjorie M. Armstrong, The Indomitable Baptists (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1967) 18. Hereinafter cited as Armstrong, The Indomitable Baptists.

⁶Albert Henry Newman as cited in Ibid., 18.

Some Baptist historians insist that, according to Luke, Christians were scattered abroad during the first and second centuries by civil and religious leaders who sought to exterminate them. The same historians believe that these scattered Christians fled to Britain where they continued their non-infant baptism by immersion, their belief in local autonomy, and their democratic procedures. These are adherents to the theory of Baptismal Succession.

There are some who contend that there has been, since the days of Christ, a chain of local churches bearing the true marks of the New Testament Church. These believers are conveniently called Church Successionists. Yet, another group believes in the Succession of Principles held by individuals or by groups who have held to the Baptist witness. Most of these successionists, though admittedly sincere and zealous, were apologetic and polemical and were engaged in rivalry with Methodists, Presbyterians and Disciples of Christ.⁷

Successionist theories are not alone in propounding theories to explain Baptist origins. There are those who stress a strong Anabaptist spiritual kinship. These stress such kinship through relationship of ideology held by such sects as German, Dutch and Swiss Anabaptists, the

⁷Ibid., 18-19.

Waldensians and Petrobrusians, the Henricians, the Novatians, and the Donatists.⁸ David Benedict, a mid-nineteenth century Baptist historian, wrote, "The peculiar sentiments of that portion of Christian professors, now called Baptists, have always lived and been maintained among the different sects and parties which have been constantly seceding from the Greek, the Roman, and other great bodies, which may properly be denominated."⁹

There are those who adhere to the English Separatist descent theory. They contend that they sprang from those English Separatists who practiced baptism for believers by immersion. According to these historians, Baptists appeared during the 1640's when Particular or Calvinistic Baptists and General or Arminian Baptists began to practice immersion. John H. Shakespeare, a British Baptist historian, argued that Particular Baptists represent the only line of unbroken Baptist witness. As he saw it, General Baptist churches had become Unitarian, maintaining little or no connection with the main body of Baptists.¹⁰

⁸Ibid., 19.

⁹David Benedict, A General History of the Baptist Denomination in America and Other Parts of the World (New York: Lewis Colby and Company, 1848) 1. Hereinafter cited as Benedict, The Baptist Denomination.

¹⁰Torbet, Baptist History, 20-21.

Both groups, the General and the Particular, were Calvinistic, agreeing with a covenant theology and emerging from English puritanism seeking to maintain the purity of a gospel church in a congregational polity. Yet, they differed in many respects. General Baptists, an Arminian modification of Calvinism, believed in atonement for all; that the Gospel call is coextensive and universal and that salvation is conditioned upon the exercise of individual free will and that the saved ought to persevere but that such perseverance is a matter of faith. To lose faith results in the loss of experience. On the other hand, Particular Baptists believed that atonement was limited to the elect; the Gospel call is only to the elect; election is unconditional, since a certain few particular individuals were chosen before the foundation of the world to be saved; that the elect have no choice but to yield to the call of Grace; man has no free will, since God has irrevocably sealed the mind and the heart of the "elect," and finally that His predetermined plan would persevere unto the end in the lives of the "elect."¹¹

With few exceptions, wherever Baptist groups appeared or Baptist principles were proclaimed, they were met with persecution.

¹¹Maloy A. Huggins, A History of North Carolina Baptists: 1727-1932 (Raleigh: The General Board of the North Carolina State Convention, 1967) 6-7. Hereinafter cited as Huggins, North Carolina Baptists.

Early persecution in England sent Baptists to Holland where they were welcomed by fellow-believers. Yet, even amidst these attempts to strangle their beliefs, men like Thomas Helwys, a General Baptist who, in the first decade of the seventeenth century, penned the first claim for freedom of worship in the English language, spoke loudly and unequivocally,

Let the King judge, it is not most equal that men should choose their religion themselves, seeing they only must stand themselves before the judgment seat of God to answer for themselves... (We) profess and teach that in all earthly things, if the King or any in Authority under him shall exercise their power against any they are not to resist by any way or means, although it were in their power, but rather to submit their lives as Christ and his disciples did, and yet keep their consciences to God.¹²

Helwys' firm adherence to these lofty principles brought imprisonment in Newgate Prison by order of the irate monarch, James I. Even from his prison cell he penned these words: "The King is a mortall man and not God, therefore hath no power over ye immortall soules of his subjects to make ye lawes and ordinances for them and to set spiritual Lords over them."¹³

English Particular Baptists had no real connection with European Anabaptists. They represented a great move in English Independency (Congregationalism) towards a believer's baptism. They arose from an

¹²Torbet, Baptist History, 38.

¹³Ibid.

independent or non-Separatist congregation in Southwark, London, that had been organized by Henry Jacob, who had emerged from Puritanism after having been for six years a refugee in Leyden. Jacob, after ministering to this congregation for six years, moved to Virginia in 1622. Other members of this early English church migrated to New England in 1638. Upon finding as much persecution there as in England they soon returned to England. One of the most interesting members of Jacob's church was a leather-seller, Praise-God Barebone, who was in 1653 chosen pastor of that half of Jacob's church that met in his home, "The Lock and Key," on Flint Street, and after whom Cromwell's parliament was named in the early 1650's.¹⁴

Though Baptists disliked organization, as early as 1624 General Baptist churches took action that led to informal associations. In the attempt at organization, General Baptists did not seek to organize with Particular Baptists, though each group of churches did organize meetings which they called "association." The nature of the associational organization differed with the two bodies. Particular Baptists, initially, had a loose organization for exchange of correspondence and occasional meetings of representatives from member churches from specific and related areas.

¹⁴Ibid., 41.

General Baptists organized in a more centralized manner and emphasized unity among all churches which led to the establishment of a national annual assembly.¹⁵

Though Baptists were looked upon with favor by Cromwell, as well they might have been since they were staunch supporters of the Protectorate, they were treated as anarchists after the Restoration. Finally, in 1687 a Declaration of Indulgence was issued by James II, though this Declaration was practically a dead letter. Subsequently, general persecution practically ceased though harassment persisted.¹⁶

As noted above, when Baptists came to the English colonies to escape persecution and to propagate the gospel, they found themselves unacceptable and persecuted everywhere except in Rhode Island. It was there that Roger Williams and John Clarke had founded the first two Baptist churches in the new world. Williams had, in 1636, been banished from Massachusetts because he had become suspect by the authorities in Boston. He, along with twelve of his friends, founded the Rhode Island colony, an "organization of a community on the unheard of principle of absolute religious liberty combined with perfect civil democracy."¹⁷

¹⁵Ibid., 44.

¹⁶Ibid., 52-53.

¹⁷Huggins, North Carolina Baptists, 19-20.

Immediate steps were undertaken to secure a charter guaranteeing such a free church in a free state, but such a charter was not granted until 1663.¹⁸ Throughout this time religious intolerance was rampant in Boston. The following case illustrated the particular treatment given Baptists:

John Clarke, Obadiah Holmes, and John Crandall were prosecuted and fined; and in the event the fine was not paid they were to be "well-whipt." Their offence was that they, at the request of blind William Witter had gone to Lynn, Massachusetts, to assist the Baptists there who were desirous of being baptized and of partaking of the supper according to the Baptist way.¹⁹

Sweet, in his Story of Religion in America, explains that the most important Baptist center in America during the Colonial period was not in New England, but was in the Middle Colonies, especially Pennsylvania and New Jersey, where a great degree of religious toleration was allowed. In this region Philadelphia was the center of Baptist activities, and it was there that in 1707 the first Baptist Association in America was formed. In 1742 this association adopted a strong Calvinistic confession of faith which is considered the turning point in American Baptist

¹⁸Ibid., 22.

¹⁹William Warren Sweet, The Story of Religion in America (New York: Harper and Brothers, 2nd Revised edition, 1950), 76. Hereinafter cited as Sweet, Religion in America.

history. Prior to this time Arminian influences had been dominant, but since then Calvinism had set the theological tone of Baptists.²⁰

Baptists were slow in organizing and in establishing churches in the southern colonies. At the time of Charles II's Restoration some Baptists moved to South Carolina from England, where they established the First Baptist Church of Charleston. A decade later a few individual Baptists were to be found in North Carolina, but it was not until 1727 that the first such church was established there.²¹

Morgan Edwards, a Baptist historian, said that there had been some Baptists in North Carolina since 1695. Another historian, Richard Knight, said that there were Baptist churches in the region of the Kehukee Association, old Albemarle, as early as 1690.²² A modern historian says that there is no contemporary evidence that Baptists were in the colony before June 12, 1714.²³ This evidence was in the form of a letter written

²⁰Walter Brownlow Posey, The Baptist Church in the Lower Mississippi Valley: 1776-1845 (Lexington, Kentucky: The University of Kentucky Press, 1957) 2. Hereinafter cited as Posey, Baptists in the Lower Mississippi Valley.

²¹William Warren Sweet, Religion on the American Frontier: The Baptists, 1783-1845 (New York: Cooper Square Publishers, Inc., 2 Volumes, 1964) I, 8. Hereinafter cited as Sweet, Religion on the American Frontier.

²²Paschal, North Carolina Baptists, I, 63-64.

²³Ibid., 123-124.

at that time by Reverend John Urmstone complaining that two of his vestrymen in the Chowan precinct were "professed Anabaptists."²⁴ Huggins said that there was probably no Baptist preacher in the colony before Paul Palmer arrived in 1720.²⁵ The first known church was established in the province in 1727 near Cisco in Chowan County. One writer said of this event, "In that year a great earthquake shook all eastern America, as that was the year our first Baptist church was constituted at Shiloh, it is suggestive."²⁶ This church has been called "Pasquotank," "Church in Camden," "North Meeting House," "Burgess Meeting House," and finally "Shiloh." It was the earliest mother church in North Carolina for from it came six other churches and nine ministers.²⁷

Between 1750 and 1760 two great changes occurred among Baptists in North Carolina. First, General Baptists were being converted to the Particular Baptist view; and secondly, the Separate Baptists came to the colony from New England. Between 1720 and 1750 there was little distinction

²⁴Huggins, North Carolina Baptists, 32.

²⁵Paschal, North Carolina Baptists, I, 130-131.

²⁶Huggins, North Carolina Baptists, 32.

²⁷George Washington Paschal and others, The Growth of One Hundred Years, (Raleigh: Board of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina, 1930) 18. Hereinafter cited as Paschal and others, One Hundred Years.

between Baptists in North Carolina. Yet, Freewill Baptists claim that only they have sustained historic Baptist beliefs, since they are Arminian and not Calvinistic and are General rather than Particularists. Actually, among most Baptists the shift from Arminianism to Calvinism did occur. Those who did not agree with the new shift in emphasis formed the nucleus of Freewill Baptists. Particular Baptists became Regular and later Missionary Baptists.²⁸

It was in 1755 that Shubal Stearns and his brother-in-law Daniel Marshall, Separatists who had come from New England to Virginia, came into the part of North Carolina now known as Guilford County. There they established the work that did more to spread the Baptist movement than any predecessors or successors. They had been urged to leave their former fields of endeavor because their vigorous and animated preaching offended the sensitivities of religious sentimentalists there. Such persecution and opposition led them to North Carolina where such treatment had always been negligible.²⁹ It was they whose influence gave birth to the "Great Awakening" of the early nineteenth century, which spread onto the frontier. They found that this province provided fertile soil for Baptist growth. They preached evangelistic sermons, emphasized conversion and "experienced

²⁸Huggins, North Carolina Baptists, 40.

²⁹Ibid., 45-47.

religion."³⁰ Though older Baptists and other protestants in the province disapproved the Separatists, they were unable to offer but token competition. Their disapproval was based upon the pulpit mannerisms of the Separatists and the type of preaching they did. The latter were noisy, gesticulated wildly, and, as an eyewitness said of them, "there were multitudes, some rolling on the ground, some wringing their hands, some in ecstasies, some praying, some weeping, and others so outrageous cursing and swearing that it was thought they were really possessed of the devil."³¹ These ministers possessed a "holy whine" which set precedents employed by the less educated ministers on the frontier for a long time. Though Separate Baptists were, by their neighbors, thought to be ignorant and illiterate they were fundamentalists and extremely devoted to individualism. They attracted hosts to their meetings and formed numerous churches. Within seventeen years the Shady Creek Church, their mother church, generated such zeal that forty-two churches evolved from her. The greatest spiritual awakening in the history of North Carolina was affecting all settled regions. Its energy was influential in bringing the "awakening" to Methodists and Presbyterians on the frontier.³²

³⁰Ibid., 50.

³¹Sweet, Religion on the American Frontier, I, 11.

³²Ibid.

CHAPTER IV

BAPTIST-NEGRO INTERACTIONS

Historically Baptists have believed in the worth and dignity of the individual and in his competency to represent himself before God and man. They have never been arrogant in their contentions though they have been adamant in retention of basic human values. These characteristics, which have been summarized in a previous chapter, account for the fact that Negroes have generally preferred this church to any other. The fact that Baptists allowed greater freedom of action and less restraint upon normal human emotions impelled many Negroes to lean towards that denomination. This preference probably arose from the circumstances that placed him in the part of the nation where Baptists were more numerous, and where white Baptists were generally of the lower economic and social groups of the time and were more sympathetic to their problems. As have all Baptists, Negroes have always established their own independent church, after they became civic wards of their own destiny.

These lines by Miss Jesse Boyd relate Negro-Baptist interactions in a generous tone:

Negroes in America, having been brought fresh from the haunts of ignorance and superstition in their native Africa, have become the marvel of the centuries. Their readiness to appropriate the culture and religious instructions of the white

people among whom they were domiciled and their rise to their present status has had no parallel in history. This situation can only be attributed to the fact that most of the whites who were able to own slaves looked upon their Negro servants as special charges, sought to teach them in the ways of morality, and sought to acquaint them with the doctrines of the Christian religion. The "Missus" of the manor would call the servants of the plantation together on Sunday afternoons, and the members of her own household with her, she would read the Bible to them. Provision was made also for the slaves to attend church services along with the white folk, and, seated in the section specially prepared for them, they would hear the gospel preached in its purity and in power by the white folk's preacher. By these means the Negro servants absorbed what literary and spiritual culture the whites exemplified.

The Negro slaves were received into the Baptist churches on profession of faith and baptism and on transmission of letter from other churches of like faith and order, just as white members were, and they were subject to the same discipline of the church. (It was, however, an inferior-non-voting-membership status.) The associations sought to impress the churches within their fellowship with their duty of cultivating an ethical and Christian relationship between masters and slaves.¹

However benevolent a picture Boyd painted, it would be erroneous to assume that such broad generalities can be held about most slave-master situations. Yet, one could hardly deny the impact such associations as she mentioned must have had upon the character of the emerging American Negro.

In many cases in the South the colored members of a household outnumbered the whites, all worshipping together in the same meeting

¹Jesse L. Boyd, A History of Baptists in America Prior to 1845 (New York: The American Press, 1957) 142, 143. Hereinafter cited as Boyd, Baptists in America.

houses. Where churches were too small to accommodate all, the colored members worshipped in the afternoon. This allowed them to exercise supervision, to discipline, and to share in support of the pastor. As they were not usually comfortable or free to do as they pleased in the white man's church, where they were often segregated by being placed in a balcony or on the back benches where they tended the master's children, they petitioned to organize their own churches and in many instances were allowed, even encouraged, to do so. In these separated churches were places where they could conduct their own affairs and thereby attain a measure of dignity and self identity. Usually, in such circumstances, it was the custom for a white church to sponsor a Negro church and, wherever practical, to supervise its development. It was this growing racial consciousness among Negroes that led later to their demands for their own independent denominations.²

Many Negro Baptist preachers came from mixed churches. So that these preachers could minister without interference, they were either manumitted by their masters or purchased and then freed by churches and associations. Contrary to what Boyd said, independent Negro churches

²Clifton E. Olmstead, History of Religion in the United States (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1960) 278. Hereinafter cited as Olmstead, Religion in the United States.

were frequently, though not always, admitted to fellowship of district associations along with all other churches and were presented by voting messengers of their own choosing.³

Very early, before 1820, some associations and state conventions took steps to have the gospel preached to slaves. This missionary activity began and prospered as did such activity among the Indians. In some cases Negroes were licensed and set apart for the task of doing such missionary services. It might be interesting to note that the first American foreign missionary was George Leile, a slave belonging to a deacon of a Baptist church in Savannah. He was freed by his master and was ordained to preach on May 20, 1775. Miss Boyd said, "To him belongs the honor of possibly being the first ordained Negro Baptist preacher in the New World." During his remaining fifty-three years he labored in the ministry in Georgia and the Island of Jamaica.⁴

There were many other Negro ministers of consequence, notably Lott Carey, John Jasper, Andrew Bryan, Joseph Willis, and three whose last names are not mentioned by Jesse L. Boyd, Sampson, Job and Caesar, to mention but a few.⁵

³Boyd, Baptists in America, 145-146.

⁴Ibid., 147.

⁵Ibid.

Many Baptists had seriously and actively sought to limit or to eliminate the institution of slavery long before it had been fastened upon the nation. From the time of Roger Williams' flight to Rhode Island efforts had been made to do away with all human bondage.⁶ From the time of the American Revolution they have been active in behalf of Negroes. Their struggle for civil and religious liberty had made the idea of bondage repugnant to them. Yet, in spite of the interest of Christians in the spiritual life of the Negroes, many of them possessed slaves. Some of them even exhibited a tendency to exploit religion as an instrument of enslavement, as a means of justifying the plight of their bonded, and would intimidate them by threatening to expel them from membership if they did not behave properly. As a whole, though, Baptists were eager and determined to improve the lot of the slave.

One historian said:

Undoubtedly the Baptists contributed heavily to the evangelization of the Southern Negroes. They began an early program and continued it unceasingly. At first, as a people of limited means and opposed to slavery, they had a great bond of sympathy with the Negro. Willing to worship with him, pray alongside the altar rail, commune with him, and be baptized in the same water by the same preacher, the

⁶Walter Brownlow Posey, Frontier Mission: A History of Religion West of the Southern Appalachians to 1861 (Lexington: The University of Kentucky Press, 1966) 8-20.

white Baptists established a working relationship with him.⁷

The first recorded action by organized Baptist groups occurred in 1778 in Virginia where those meeting in Gouchland County discussed the framing of a petition to the next General Assembly of Virginia praying that slaves might be more humanely treated by allowing more normal human relations and living conditions.⁸ Eleven years later, meeting in Richmond, the same fellowship agreed upon the following statement:

Resolved, that slavery is a violent deprivation of the rights of nature and is inconsistent with the republican government, and therefore we recommend it to our brethren, to make use of every legal means to extirpate this horrid evil from the land, and pray almighty God that our honorable legislature may have it in their power to proclaim the great "Jubilee" consistent with the principles of good policy.⁹

Generally though, Baptist associations refrained from endorsing the resolution and advised their members to act according to their conscience; one association even requested the General Committee not to become involved with political issues. Their recommendation was in keeping with the Baptist policy of absolute separation of church and state.

⁷Walter Brownlow Posey, Frontier Mission: A History of Religion West of the Southern Appalachians to 1861 (Lexington: The University of Kentucky Press, 1966) 210-212. Hereinafter cited as Posey, Frontier Mission.

⁸Ibid., 334.

⁹Olmstead, Religion in the United States, 365.

Most responsible Christian leaders in the Ante-Bellum South never defended the institution of slavery as a positive good. They merely looked upon it as an evil brought upon them by Adam and Eve, just as poverty, disease and death. They believed that in the future there would be no bondage, there would be equality, there would be no poverty, disease or death. They considered their slaves as persons and felt a keen sense of responsibility toward them. They recognized their obligation to teach them spiritual truths. Another misconception persisting among social reformers to this day is that Negroes were pushed from white churches. The truth of the matter is that they left of their own accord, after emancipation, so as to be absolutely free to make their own decisions. Under such circumstances they would feel and did feel more fully emancipated.¹⁰

According to William Warren Sweet, during the first third of the nineteenth century, the South was more critical of slavery than was the North. By that time issues of conflict between poor whites and Negro slaves centered on production of agricultural goods and disposal of the same. It was in the South that the first anti-slavery newspaper was published. It was in the South that the first State Anti-Slavery Society was formed. By 1820 North Carolina had more such societies than any

¹⁰William Warren Sweet, The American Churches, an Interpretation (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1957) 85.

other state. Anti-slavery sentiment in North Carolina was strong, and the Manumission Society of this state was particularly active. These sentiments were changed by bitter and vituperative attacks made upon the South by northern and western abolitionists. Too, the South had grown anxious over its growing minority status in the Union.¹¹

It was this vituperative criticism by Northern Baptists upon Southern institutions, notably slavery and a defense of that insidious institution by Southern Baptists that brought about a split of Baptists into Northern and Southern groups as early as 1844. Since that time Southern Baptists have grown so much more rapidly and numerous that today more than three quarters of all Baptists are within the South. More than half of all Negro church members in the South are Baptists.¹²

Orlan and Marjorie Armstrong state that the contention by some historians today that in the Ante-Bellum South the people supported slavery as an institution and actively participated in the slave trade or owned slaves is a myth. Nothing could be farther from the truth! The majority of the people, Baptists included, were not of the slave-owning class.

¹¹Hilrie Shelton Smith, Robert T. Handy, and Lefferts A. Loetscher, American Christianity: An Interpretation with Representative Documents (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1963) 167-168.

¹²Luman H. Long (ed.), The World Almanac and Book of Facts, (New York: Newspaper Enterprise Association, Inc., 1971) 323-327.

Most Baptists were humble people, small landowners who tilled their own fields. It is true that many Baptists did own slaves. It is equally true that many liberated them and gave them financial aid. According to most reliable figures, less than ten per cent of the Baptists owned any slaves. Most of those who did owned one or two. These non-slave owners lined up with their neighbors when they were included in abolitionist criticism and condemnation.¹³

As settlers moved into Transylvania, few of them were disposed to own slaves. Those Baptists who were so disposed were, in most cases, financially unable to do so. Yet, as population grew and as wealth increased, some did purchase slaves. Most slave owners in the county were prosperous farmers from coastal South Carolina who were Presbyterians or Episcopalians. At the time Transylvania was made a county, in 1861, there were 447 slaves within its limits. Baptists then constituted more than half of the church membership in the county, yet they owned about one-fourth of the slaves. There were no Negroes living in Hogback, Eastatoe, or in Gloucester, and in the region there were four Baptist churches. All the County's slaves were in Little River, Boyd, Brevard,

¹³Orlan K. Armstrong and Marjorie M. Armstrong, The Indomitable Baptists (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, 1967) 164.

Cathey's Creek and Dunn's Rock Townships.¹⁴ Church records and locations of Negro population at the time, indicate that all slaves owned by Baptists were in the Little River, Cathey's Creek and Bethel Churches. This would indicate that there were none in the Macedonia, New Providence, or Old Toxaway Churches.

Most Negroes came from two states, Georgia and South Carolina. There is little likelihood that any Negroes were in the Transylvania region until the beginning of the nineteenth century. Prior to that time the small farmers of the Cathey's Creek and Davidson's River areas were alone in the settlement. Many of the Negroes brought to Transylvania were two or three generations away from African ancestors. Some of them were part Indian, part white and part Negro. There are descendants of such

¹⁴United States Census Bureau, Sixth Census of the United States (Washington: United States Bureau of the Census, 1841, Supplement) 212.

United States Census Bureau, Seventh Census of the United States (Washington: United States Bureau of the Census, Supplement, 1853) 367.

United States Census Bureau, Eighth Census of the United States (Washington: United States Bureau of the Census, Supplement, 1861) 195-201.

United States Census Bureau, Ninth Census of the United States (Washington: United States Bureau of the Census, Supplement, 1872) 206-214.

parentage in the County even today. When interviewed, they requested that no names be divulged, for it would cause them and other prominent white families considerable embarrassment, since there are families passing for white that have a mixed blood background. Though there were 447 slaves, there were others that were not classified at all, since they could not be made slaves as off-springs of white fathers. There were four free Negroes, one of whom became a distinguished citizen of Brevard. He, James Aiken, was a barber and restaurant owner at the same time. A child of one of the other three free Negroes is still alive in Brevard, at the age of 104.

Cathey's Creek and Little River Church Minutes show that before 1835 there were Negro members in both. When the Little River Church was organized in 1838, it had five Negro charter members.¹⁵ In Cathey's Creek's re-organization just prior to 1840 there were six Negro members involved. They were not allowed to withdraw because churches to which they could have gone would not accept Negro members.¹⁶

Education in Transylvania was mostly church-related at the time; so Negroes received their education in Sunday School. Yet, on

¹⁵Little River Church Minutes (3 Volumes) III, 8. In possession of Church Clerk. Hereinafter cited as Little River Minutes.

¹⁶Cathey's Creek Church Minutes (4 Volumes) IV, 16. In possession of Church Clerk. Hereinafter cited as Cathey's Creek Minutes.

occasion, Negro children attended the short term church-affiliated schools. There was no broad social difference between the races at the time, for mention is made in Cathey's Creek and Little River's Minutes of Negro women working at quiltings alongside white women. While Little River's building was being erected, labor was secured by voluntary means. Work of the day was made enjoyable by contests and by spread dinners. Here again there was in no instance distinction between Negro and white members.¹⁷

Finally, when the thunder of cannon, the pillage and plunder of roving marauders, and the dying echoes of the Civil War had ceased, there were more than four hundred Negroes in Transylvania who were disowned and impoverished. Although their white neighbors had little, the Negroes had less. Not even their homes belonged to them. Their former status, although debilitating and destructive to human nature, had cared for their physical needs and had given spiritual and intellectual nourishment, of a sort. Formerly they had, at least, been accepted into the lower levels of society. Now, they were free, but homeless, unenfranchised, and unable to provide for themselves. Yet they had found a

¹⁷Little River Minutes, III, 5.

new hope that came from realizing that for the first time in their lives they were free, really free, to make their own decisions. They found and exhibited courage, seldom equalled by man, and set resolutely about the task of providing for themselves. To the descendants of those courageous men and women time is divided into but two periods: before freedom and after freedom. They are convinced that total emancipation from the past will take a long time. Just as Transylvania's earliest inhabitants had soon provided places of worship even before they had adequately housed themselves, so did this new group of free Americans set themselves to building their places of worship. Yet, they were not alone in their effort. Their former masters felt obligated to help them. After all, they had always felt responsible for their well-being.

What of their church development after 1861? Even during the pre-Civil War era many of them had gathered under arbors and on river banks to sing, to pray and to baptize converts. After their liberation they had to find sites and funds to build churches. Though they were welcome to attend the white churches until their worship home was completed, they chose to move out and start independently. For the most part, the beginnings of the Negro churches are hazy and legendary. That two churches were begun the same year is known. One group, those who came from the Little River Church, began holding services near the French Broad River near an old brush arbor just east of where their present building stands. They

named their church French Broad. How gloriously must the songs have reverberated against the surrounding hills as they sang!

When the weather would not permit outside gatherings, Frank Allison, a local farmer, and his two sons let them meet in their old blacksmith shop near the arbor. It was there that, within the year, their church was organized. The seven charter members elected Reverend Robert Walker their first pastor. Like the children of Israel, they had begun their march. They had caught a glimpse of the Promised Land. They were growing into full manhood and womanhood. Though they did not know the perils and requisites of freedom, they lifted their arms and brought in the future.¹⁸

The other group came from Cathey's Creek. Their chosen site was more difficult to obtain and it took them longer to select their permanent site. At Cathey's Creek they had been non-participants and had sat in the rear of the church where they tended children of their masters during worship services. Now, they too, as free men made their first collective act, one of worship. They established a church membership of thirty-five adults and children, making it one of the largest in the area. Their first sanctuary was in a small one-room house sitting in a corn field, in Brevard

¹⁸French Broad Church Minutes (2 Volumes) I, 5. In possession of Church Clerk. Hereinafter cited as French Broad Minutes.

Township.¹⁹ For a year or so they worshipped there before they bought a site on Rice Street. They were unable to meet payment on the property so once again they were without a place to worship. They secured permission to meet in a two-room school house, which was 300 yards from today's Broad Street Post Office. They were able to use this building only on alternate Sundays, as they shared it with a newly organized group of Negro Methodists. When this arrangement became unsatisfactory, they sought and found a site on which to erect their own structure. The site chosen was then bought from its owner, Frank Jenkins. This site was unsatisfactory since it lay between the railroad and Mills Avenue, where noise became too offensive. Finally they purchased the present site which is east of Mills Avenue, where they have been ever since. They named their church Bethel, which means "House of God."²⁰

¹⁹Bethel Church Minutes (2 Volumes) I, 12-15. In possession of Church Clerk. Hereinafter cited as Bethel Minutes.

²⁰Cathey's Creek Minutes, IV, 7-8.

CHAPTER V

BAPTIST-CHEROKEE INTERACTIONS

When the Cherokee ended their centuries of migration, that saw them leave Mexico for the regions bordering the Great Lakes, in the United States, and finally arrived in the mountains of Western North Carolina, they established their central village at Cuttawa, modern Bryson City.¹ From this village others were created beside or near the Oconaluftee and other rivers where they could find adequate supplies of fish and other game. At their maximum period of expansion they had forty-two villages, all of which were united in a loose confederation, with their principal village being Echota. This was no ordinary village, for it was their "city of refuge" and general capital, located in East Tennessee. There at Echota lived their arch-chief and there met their general council. As a city of refuge, it was a sanctuary where enemies or criminals could receive sanctuary. This practice, of granting sanctuary, was similarly granted in other major council areas.²

¹Robert S. Cotterill, The Southern Indians: The Story of the Civilized Tribes Before Removal (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1954) 1-5. Hereinafter cited as Cotterill, The Southern Indians.

²William W. Stringfield, "North Carolina Cherokees," North Carolina Booklet, III (1903) 8. Hereinafter cited as Stringfield, North Carolina Cherokees.

The Cherokee never used the French Broad Valley as a major place of abode. Instead, they made of it an inter-tribal hunting ground. Nevertheless, it is known that at least one village was in the valley within the present confines of Transylvania County, Kanasta, or Conestee.³ It was located near Dunn's Rock, which was a vantage point from which Indian hunters could scan the lowland for animals. Not too far distant are Conestee Falls, a holy place to the Cherokee.

Seldom, if ever, did the Cherokee and the white invaders have serious encounters within this region. The Indians' chief trail between villages in northern and southern regions of their vast domain traversed Transylvania. After the whites entered the county, their only contact with the Indians usually occurred when they met on this trail or when some curious Indian would leave the trail and peer into the settler's cabin. Frequently, when the Indian followed this trail, the Eastatoe, he was beginning a hunting foray, or just travelling to see his fellow-tribesmen in the lower settlements. On hunting forays, which happened very regularly, hundreds of them would gather on the headwaters of Davidson's River and from there start their annual hunt. Silently they would ford streams, ascend and descend the mountains and cross the intervening lowlands as they

³Foster A. Sondley, A History of Buncombe County North Carolina (Asheville: The Advocate Publishing Company, 2 Volumes, 1930) II, 582.

pursued their prey. It was this stealth and silence coupled with the fact that they were fully armed that frightened the white women and children. The Eastatoe, still bearing the same name, crosses from Davidson's River to the French Broad near Rosman and from there leads on into South Carolina. Just on the edge of South Carolina's border is a mountain which to this day is called "Indian Campground" from the fact that they always camped there on their forays. When they reached the lands below their campground they would disband, the hunt was over, and one by one they would wind their way back home.⁴

These occurrences were so clearly foreseeable that the whites had adequate time to make precautionary preparations. Most families would send their children into Burke County for the hunt's duration. Patrols were set up within settlements to assure that no stray Indian would straggle into the settlement and frighten the women, or do something worse. As an added precaution, about 1800 John Carson and others built a fort near Eastatoe somewhere between Island Ford and Conestee Creek. This fort, known as John Carson's Fort, was never used.

Several times boundaries were solemnly negotiated between the whites and the Cherokee. The treaties, supposedly, were to prevent

⁴Ora L. Jones, "Transylvania County," The Asheville Sunday Citizen, January 13, 1917.

either group from crossing into the domain of the other. Though the Cherokee respected the treaties, the white man never did. His insatiable appetite repeatedly called for new frontiers, always further west. The first of these demarcation lines was that drawn by the British Government in 1763, the Proclamation Line. It was, as were all successive lines, violated by the frontiersmen. Another treaty was imposed upon the Indians in the Treaty at Hard Labor, South Carolina in 1768. Each new treaty called for new Cherokee concessions. As the red man's lands shrunk the white man's appetite grew. In 1776 a force under General Griffith Rutherford, 2400 men, crossed into the Indian lands and laid the country waste. Thirty-six of the forty-two villages were destroyed, crops were burned, old men and women were ruthlessly slaughtered, and those that fell were scalped. Even injured women were "helped to their end." What prisoners were taken were either killed on the spot or were sold into slavery.⁵

For two decades more the Indians moved grudgingly over as the whites came in. In 1791 another treaty was signed at White's Fort, now Knoxville, Tennessee, persuading the reluctant Cherokee to recognize as

⁵John Preston Arthur, Western North Carolina, A History From 1730-1913 (Asheville: Edward Buncombe Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution, 1914) 576-577. Hereinafter cited as Arthur, Western North Carolina, A History From 1730-1913.

legal such encroachments as had been made. Successive treaties were made in 1798, 1804, 1805, 1806, 1813 and 1817, each requiring further Indian cessions. The last stipulated that more than six thousand of them leave Georgia and Tennessee for new lands in Arkansas, where they were to be protected in perpetuity. Yet, in 1819 another treaty was entered into that caused them to cede nearly all of their remaining lands in North Carolina east of the Nantahala mountains. Some were allowed to remain within the isolated coves where they could not impede the white man's progress. Those that did remain in their old homes were organized under a republican government with New Echota as their capital. Who is there that does not know the tragic tale of the final removal initiated by the Treaty of New Echota on December 29, 1835.⁶

Now, specifically relating to Transylvania County, by this time many Godly men and women had come into the area. By 1835 there were two established churches, Cathey's Creek, a Baptist church, and Davidson's River, a Presbyterian. From the first many churchmen were saddened by the covetousness of their race and sought to cultivate friendly relations with the savage. These man and women brought them medicine, white man's clothing and food, tools and the English language. They

⁶Ibid., 576.

brought the Christian gospel. Little difficulty, once the Indian accepted the credibility of the white man, was encountered in bridging the gap between Indian religion and the Christian gospel. There were many striking similarities. Though most Cherokee was idolatrous, many believed that three sacred beings, who created all things and will eventually judge all men on a great day of judgment, sit on three thrones on high. They were the same being, yet were at the same time different in form. They are unanimous in action and thought. They, and they alone, are to be heard and can answer prayer. These three have angelic messengers who come to earth and tend to human needs.

Yehowa, the great spiritual king, though a man, was still a spirit. His name was so sacred that it could not be spoken. He it was that judged and controlled the movements of things on earth, under earth, and above it, since he was their creator. He commanded that men set aside one day a week and honor and talk to him. He had made the first man of red clay, and had made his companion from his ribs. The Cherokee said that there was a great flood that destroyed all sinners. Before this great flood their preachers and prophets had warned them of what was to happen. They were ordered to escape destruction by obeying their God and their parents. After the flood was to come yet another destruction, this time by fire. The good and the bad would be separated after death

with the good going to eternal happy hunting grounds and the bad to be led to a deep chasm spanned by a pole with was guarded by two fierce dogs. These dogs would move the poles, thus throwing the bad into the inferno below.⁷

Cherokee religion had been adapted from the Christian religion. Seventy years earlier a Jesuit priest, Christian Priber, had dwelt among them and had declared the Christian faith to them. Most people living at the time of Priber's sojourn had passed away, so when once again white men began relating their faith to them they thought the missionaries were bringing back their old religion, though there is evidence that their first and only Christian concepts came from Priber's previous sojourn among them. This belief facilitated their acceptance of Christianity and made more bearable their association with the whites.⁸

Since so few Indians lived within the Cathey's Creek area, the church established no missions among them; but it did seek to bring them, and any others, into their spiritual fold. In their church minutes there are several references to Indians and a listing of three Indian members

⁷Emmet Starr, History of the Cherokee Indians, Jack Strickland Rennard (es.) (Fayetteville, Arkansas: Indian Heritage Association, 1967) 1-2. Hereinafter cited as Starr, Cherokee Indians.

⁸Ibid., 247.

during the troublesome 1840's.⁹ Other Baptist churches like Oak Grove, Macedonia, East Fork, and Little River, also specifically mention Indian members. Oak Grove, for example, had six charter members, two of whom were the Cherokee couple, Mr. and Mrs. John Jackson.¹⁰

Organized mission work was begun among the Cherokee as early as 1815. In 1817 Humphrey Posey, a missionary of the National Baptist Convention, was appointed as a missionary to the Valley River villages in extreme Western North Carolina. There he established a model school, farm, and church, where he taught children and adults alike. His primary aim was to train them as preachers and teachers. At this he was imminently successful. Indians from Posey's settlement went to other villages preaching and teaching. All of these factors brought a period of rapid social progress to the Cherokee. Though they received the mission well, many whites were antagonistic. In 1833 Evan Jones, Superintendent of the mission, said:

The white people are constantly opposing every great effort to instruct the poor benighted Indian. The great

⁹Cathey's Creek Church Minutes, (3 Volumes) I, 11. In possession of Church Clerk. Hereinafter cited as "Cathey's Creek Church Minutes."

¹⁰Oak Grove Church Minutes, (2 Volumes) I, 7. In possession of Church Clerk, and others. Hereinafter cited as "Oak Grove Church Minutes."

objection urged by most people in these parts is the enmity of the old wars, in which some of their friends have been killed by them.¹¹

A year later Jones wrote: "The spirit of inquiry is gaining ground among the Indians, but here we want the aid of books. They are eager to read anything they can get hold of."¹²

By that time there were more than two hundred communicants connected with the mission. One of these was Jesse Bushyhead, who became an ordained preacher among his people.

It is worth noting that Posey had been sent among the Cherokee by the Philadelphia Baptist Convention. It was done at the urging of Richard Furman of South Carolina, who was at the time moderator and spokesman of the famous National Baptist Triennial Convention. He was probably the best known Baptist in the country at that time.¹³ This was not the beginning of Baptist work among the Indians, for ever since the days of Roger Williams such missionary endeavors had occasionally

¹¹William Brownlow Posey, The Baptist Church in the Lower Mississippi Valley: 1776-1845 (Lexington, Kentucky: The University of Kentucky Press, 1957) 82. Hereinafter cited as Posey, The Baptist Church in the Lower Mississippi Valley.

¹²Ibid.

¹³Orland Kay Armstrong and Marjorie M. Armstrong, The Indomitable Baptists (Garden City, New York: 1967) 126-128. Hereinafter cited as Armstrong, The Indomitable Baptists.

occurred. It, nevertheless, was the first effective work among the Cherokee. Such constructive spiritual and social endeavors were constantly being up-rooted and terminated by the various Indian removals. These determined missionaries frequently accompanied the Indians on their removals and retained effective direction of their religious undertakings.¹⁴

Cathey's Creek Church Minutes report that during the great removal of 1838-39 several sympathy prayer meetings were held in their church. At one of these Reverend Jesse Bushyhead, from the Valley Town Mission, conducted the meeting.¹⁵

There is no authoritative source that indicates that special efforts, other than those undertaken by such missions as that at Valley Town, were taken to educate the Indians. Yet, the same thing can be said about the efforts taken to educate whites of the time, in that specific area. Baptist churches in Transylvania, especially Cathey's Creek and probably Little River, conducted rudimentary educational programs for

¹⁴William Brownlow Posey, Frontier Mission: A History of Religion West of the Southern Appalachians to 1861 (Lexington, Kentucky: The University of Kentucky Press, 1966) 181-182. Hereinafter cited as Posey, Frontier Mission.

¹⁵"Cathey's Creek Minutes," II, 12.

families of members. Since there were Indian family members they were as welcome to learn as were any others.¹⁶

It is interesting to read what Arthur Lanman, Daniel Webster's secretary, said about the Cherokee of Western North Carolina, as he saw them on his visit, in 1848:

About three fourths of the entire population can read their own language, and, though the majority of them understand English, a very few can speak the language. They practice, to a considerable extent, the science of agriculture, and have acquired such a knowledge of the mechanic arts as to answer them for all ordinary purposes, for they manufacture their own clothing, their own ploughs, and other farming utensils, their own axes, and even their own guns. Their women are no longer treated as slaves, but as equals: the men labor in the fields and their wives are devoted entirely to household employments. They keep the same domestic animals that are kept by their white neighbors, and cultivate all the common grains of the country. They are probably as temperate as any other class of people on the face of the earth, honest in their business intercourse, moral in their thoughts, words, and deeds, and distinguished by their faithfulness in performing the duties of religion. They are chiefly Methodists and Baptists, and have regularly ordained ministers who preach to them on every Sabbath. They keep in order the public road through their settlement. By a law of the state they have the right to vote, but seldom exercise that right. They live in small log houses of their own construction, and have everything they need or desire in the way of food. They are, in fact, the happiest community that I have met in this southern country.¹⁷

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Arthur, Western North Carolina, 582-583.

CHAPTER VI

BAPTISTS AND THE CIVIL WAR

Though South Carolina had carried out her threat to secede from the Union, and several other Southern states had soon followed her in formation of the Confederate States of America, the mountaineers of Western North Carolina hardly got excited about the affair. North Carolina had already, in February of 1861, taken the matter of secession to the people by ballot, where the issue was presumably settled. The only region of the state that voted overwhelmingly against secession had been the western counties. The citizens of western Henderson County then settled down to what they considered to be a matter of more immediate concern, that of becoming a county separate from Henderson County.

That spring of 1861 was a particularly lovely one, as told by one of Transylvania County's soldier sons a few years later.¹ Men gathered, as they had on previous springs, for the muster in the French Broad Valley between Brevard and Pisgah Forest. This muster was a gala occasion. The men drilled until they tired of it and then they played strenuous games, featuring physical prowess. Finally, they, and the women and children,

¹Ora L. Jones, "Transylvania County," The Asheville Sunday Citizen, Asheville, North Carolina, March 17, 1917. Hereinafter cited as Jones, Sunday Citizen.

gathered around the picnic tables and ate a sumptuous meal prepared by the women. Before partaking they bowed their heads while someone said grace and uttered a lengthy prayer urging that peace be restored to their Southern neighbors. After the feast and the following social occasion, families began drifting homeward. A few of the more reckless men gathered in some hidden retreat and drank hard liquor and gambled until they either tired of it or went to sleep.

On other days they lived ordinary frontier lives, seemingly unperturbed by calamitous events being shaped about them. There were twelve weeks during which children attended school, if they could not escape doing so, and teen-age boys formed their club and acted as boys do today. They bedeviled their community with their harmless, yet, offensive pranks. The worst thing they did was to throw rotten eggs at Negroes who happened to be out after dark.²

On April 12, 1861, South Carolinians, fearing arrival of Northern reinforcements, attacked Fort Sumter, in Charleston Harbour. President Abraham Lincoln issued a call for troops to put down the rebellion. Rather than commit troops to fight neighboring states, four other Southern states seceded.³ On May 20, 1861, North Carolina took her stand beside her

²Ibid.

³Thomas A. Bailey, A Diplomatic History of the American People (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Seventh Edition, 1964) 319.

neighbors. From the first this stand was far from unified. Reluctance was more prominent in the western part of the state where slavery was less extensive.

That part of Henderson County readily identifiable as Transylvania had only 2700 people in 1860. The same census showed that Henderson's population was more than ten thousand. The census of 1870 listed fewer than eight thousand in Henderson County.⁴

Transylvania's first tax list, 1861, shows that there were four free blacks in the County and 447 slaves owned by 97 slave-holders.⁵ In Transylvania's first official census, 1870, 309 blacks were listed.⁶ This indicates that during the troubled years, 1861-1865, the Negro population had diminished by 128. The same Ninth Census showed the origins of Transylvanians: of these 1,845 citizens, 661 were natives of South Carolina, 40 were natives of Georgia, 13 were from Virginia, 7 were from Tennessee, and one was foreign born.⁷

⁴Ninth Census of the United States: 1870, Population (Washington: United States Bureau of the Census, 1872) I, Part 1, 45. Hereinafter cited as Ninth Census, 1870.

⁵Transylvania County Tax List, for 1861, Tax Office, Brevard, North Carolina.

⁶Ninth Census, 1870.

⁷Ibid., I, 286.

Lieutenant Garland S. Ferguson of the famous 25th. regiment describes that unit:

There were but few slave owners in the regiment, 90 per cent of the men were farmers and farmer's sons, fully 80 per cent, home owners, of the sons of farmers who owned their farms. The majority of the men had been Union men until after President Lincoln's Proclamation, they then regarded their interests with the South.⁸

By adding numbers of Transylvanians attributed to each of the regiments listed above, we find there that at least 530 men and officers of Transylvania were in various branches of the Confederate service. One reference lists two Confederate cavalry units, Companies A and H of the 69th. regiment, as being from Transylvania. Yet, to determine who of these men listed therein were Baptists requires a comparison of church rosters.

Other Transylvanians were on Union rosters and among such groups as the "outliers," "bush-whackers," "renegades," or other bands of outlaws. Most Union sympathizers were from Little River and from Gloucester.⁹ This seems a bit strange as Little River was one of the two communities possessing more slaves and Gloucester was a community

⁸Ibid., 293.

⁹Louis H. Manarin, North Carolina Troops, Cavalry (Raleigh: State Department of Archives and History, 2 Volumes, 1966) Volume II, 562-565, 581-582; John Wheeler Moore, 4 Volumes (Raleigh: Ashe and Gatling, 1882.

possessing no slaves at all. More than half the able-bodied males were in one of these units. Some of them slipped back into Brevard or the area surrounding that town under cover of night and caused great anxiety and suffering by their wanton destruction and ruthless attacks upon the person and property of their former neighbors. To protect themselves against the invasions of these lawless ones, a home guard was organized from the ranks of the aged and those who were too young to serve in the regular army. They were no match for the lawless, nor did they receive mercy from them when confrontation occurred. They were robbed, maimed, burned out, or even slain. These "outliers" were deserters who had no object but to rob or to evade conscription officers. During the later years of the war they were joined by "bush-whackers" who helped them steal uniforms from dead Confederates with which they paraded as loyal "Southerners." In these uniforms they would slip unsuspectingly upon their neighbors to impoverish or to ruin them. On one occasion such a band stopped at Philip Sitton's home, on the border between Henderson and Transylvania Counties, ordered him to prepare a meal for them and, after having consumed it, turned upon their host and killed him. On another occasion a man named Peahuff was similarly slain and left beside the road near Cedar

Mountain, where he was later buried by a female passer-by. There were numerous incidents of wanton destruction and treachery.¹⁰

Those who had marched off so gallantly to defend their homes and the honor of their state were soon disillusioned. They learned that deeper issues were at stake, issues in which they had little interest, such as maintenance of the institution of slavery, and reports of disorders among their loved ones back home. They left their ranks, returned to their homes to wreak their vengeance upon their desecrators, and then some of them joined the swelling ranks of the lawless. The western part of the State quickly became disillusioned after the year of initial Confederate victories began to turn into depressing defeat. Optimism and enthusiasm turned into pessimism and disillusionment. Deserters became so numerous that very little social stigma was attached to desertion.¹¹

As loyal Transylvanians were spread across battlefields from the Mississippi to Gettysburg in 1863, their grey ranks were so thin that too few were left in the mountains to prevent depredations of Union sympathizers and outlaws. It was during these years that normal church

¹⁰Ora L. Jones, "Transylvania County," The Transylvania Times, March 17, 1969. Hereinafter cited as The Transylvania Times.

¹¹John Gilchrist Barrett, The Civil War in North Carolina (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1963) 242. Hereinafter cited as Barrett, Civil War in North Carolina.

activities were seriously curtailed. Yet, at the same time it was a period when true Christian ardor was demonstrated. Records of those years show that Baptists still managed to maintain, in a skeletonized way, their missions among Negroes and Indians--after being assisted by leaders from among these groups.¹²

From late 1863 until the conclusion of the War, Union sympathizers operated their "underground railroad" so effectively that it was quite simple to move Federal troops, spies, military secrets, escaped slaves, prisoners escaping from Andersonville Prison in Georgia, and supplies through Transylvania County. This Federal line of communication consisted of a string of homes friendly to the Union cause. Messengers received help at these homes at night and passed it through the Federal forces in East Tennessee. The route ran over the same old Indian trail, Eastatoe, entering the County through the Crab Creek Section, into the Little River Valley, across Davidson's River, through Gloucester, and into Jackson County. One Baptist minister of the region, Edward Allison, was a pilot of Federal forces along the trail. He was the unit's chaplain.¹³

¹²Church Minutes of Cathey's Creek and Little River Churches. Volumes III and IV respectively, 1863.

¹³Jones, The Transylvania Times, March 17, 1969.

Near the end of the War the notorious band of Kirk's Raiders entered the region. Though Kirk issued orders against ruthless and wanton destruction, they were ignored by foragers roaming independently from his central unit. This unit, Colonel George Kirk's Third Regiment of North Carolina Mounted Infantry Volunteers, was a detachment of General John M. Schofield's Twenty Third Army Corps.¹⁴ Detached elements of Kirk's Regiment terrorized the area and acted as lawlessly as had other groups of marauders. This unit entered the region by the Crab Creek Road, passing through Brevard, going out through Gloucester Township with Reverend Edward Allison as pilot.¹⁵

During 1863, to combat Federal raiders from Tennessee and local marauders, a detachment of Confederate cavalry was sent to the County. They were stationed near the French Broad River above Brevard, near what is now Toxaway and the Sapphire Country. When these forces were withdrawn from the County, many of the loyal people left their homes, where they no longer felt safe from attack.¹⁶

¹⁴Stephen B. Davis and others (eds.), War of the Rebellion: Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies (Washington: Government Printing House, 1892, 4 series, 69 Volumes) Series I, XXXIX, 571.

¹⁵Barrett, The Civil War in North Carolina, 235.

¹⁶Clark's Regiments, IV, 382.

After the War, many who had been marauders returned to Transylvania County and settled where they had been before, as if nothing out of the ordinary had happened. Some, those who were known to have participated in depredations, were forcefully expelled. In a few instances marauders took over lands formerly owned by loyal Confederates, who had been slain in their defense of their State. The most ironic twist of all was that many former "outliers," "bush-whackers," and deserters applied for Confederate pensions in weekly installments.¹⁷

Upon comparing lists of Confederate forces from Transylvania County, as found in Moore's Roster, and in Manarin's North Carolina Troops, with Baptist Church membership lists, better than 60 per cent of those serving in the Confederate Army were of that Church. Of the 530 serving from that County, 327 were Baptists.¹⁸

"Baptist churches were torn apart internally by the war. Their memberships were depleted and their various programs were either limited or terminated."

No reliable figures could be ascertained as to the numbers serving in Federal or in the various irregular groups. Baptists in the

¹⁷Jones, The Transylvania Times, March 17, 1969.

¹⁸Comparison of various church memberships with Moore's Roster, Clark's Regiments, and Manarin's North Carolina Troops.

County exhibited, during the War, the same divisiveness shown by other Transylvania County denominations. There were participants in every type of unit represented; Confederate, Union, and irregulars.

CHAPTER VII

TRANSYLVANIA BAPTISTS

Though Baptists came to Transylvania early, they were not alone in doing so. They used the same routes, especially that through Douthet's Gap onto the Crab Creek and Eastatoe Trails, into the Little River and French Broad Valleys, to Davidson's River and into Cathey's Creek. In general, their motives were similar to those of other settlers. Yet, they had other than purely economic motives. Whereas other denominations, except possibly Quakers, were unmolested in their free expression in North Carolina, Baptists after the War of the Regulation sought new land where Governor William Tryon's strong arm would not reach them. Those who came from eastern and piedmont North Carolina did not rush into western Mecklenburg, of which Transylvania was a part, but came slowly until the American Revolution.¹

In another section of this paper reference was made to a land grant made to William Porter on Cathey's Creek in 1783.² Since he settled

¹John Preston Arthur, Western North Carolina: A History From 1730-1913, (Asheville: Edward Buncombe Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution, 1914) 125. Hereinafter cited as Arthur, Western North Carolina.

²Rutherford County Registry of Deeds, Book 4, 42. In possession of the Register of Deeds, Rutherfordton. Hereinafter cited as "Rutherford County Deeds."

on Cathey's Creek and creeks were generally named after early settlers , residents of the area contend that a Cathey preceded him there . Though Cathey is a common family name in the County to this day , none of them has records substantiating such contentions . Yet , it is easy to follow their records back more than 150 years . The purpose of this paper is not to determine who settled the area first , though history must strive to determine this , but to merely indicate the emergence and growth of Baptists there and what effect they had upon the community .

Unquestionably Baptists worked on Cathey's Creek earlier than elsewhere in the area . Before 1865 there were only three other general areas of Baptist work . The County was so cut up into isolated pockets of settlements , by mountains , with no roads to connect them , that each settlement became , to a certain extent , self-contained . Under such circumstances , it was quite natural for these pockets of believers to develop their own independent institutions . One of these areas was in North Little River , another was in South Little River , and another was in Gloucester . For the sake of convenience and for better understanding these regions will be taken separately . It would be impossible , however , to entirely separate them for , from the very beginning , each independent church sought association with its nearest fellow-believers .

Cathey's Creek , the "Mother Church , " of Baptists in the County , was organized much earlier than is suspected by most of her present

members, many of whom believe it began around 1813. It actually was born sometime between 1783 and 1800, for in the latter year it applied for admission to the Bethel Association in Upper South Carolina.³ When this group had become so large that it was unwieldy and its meeting place too distant for all member churches to conveniently attend, it was divided. There is a distinct possibility that Cathey's distance made her membership questionable. Saluda, the new association, was born on November 5, 1802. Its first meeting was held early the next year. Cathey's Creek was a charter member of this new association.⁴ During the next two years the Saluda Association did not meet. When it finally met in 1806, one of its problems was the spiritual condition of Cathey's Creek Church. It appears, from the records, that there were serious irregularities in the discipline of its membership. These irregularities were concerned with alcoholic beverages and worship practices. The Saluda Associational Records of 1808 said:

There has been complaints against Cathie's [sic] Creek church for three sessions past, and we have at everytime advised them as we thought was best- grievances still remain; and the church being present, both parties confess they are

³Bethel Association Records (Microfilm) 1800, 9. In possession of Furman University Library. Hereinafter cited as Bethel Association Records.

⁴Leah Townshend, South Carolina Baptists: 1770-1805, (Florence, South Carolina: The Florence Printing Company, 1935) 304. Hereinafter cited as Townshend, South Carolina Baptists.

ready for a full investigation, and desire the association to take up the case in full. Thereupon we appoint brethren Moses Holand, Elnathan Davis, Rovert Orr, George Vandevere, and James Crawther, a select committee, to look into the conduct of Cathie's Creek church and examine every party and circumstance, and to make a report to the next association.⁵

The records of the Association state that at the time of the irregularities, and the subsequent investigation, there were twenty members of the church and that its pastor was Reverend James Chastain.⁶

At the next meeting of the Association, 1809, the following action was taken:

The committee appointed last year to inquire into the affairs of Cathie's [sic] Creek church report that they find the church quite out-of-order. Therefore we recommend that the association withdraw fellowship from said church.⁷

Very little is known about the first home of this early church, other than that it was constructed of logs and that it was located near the present site.⁸ Yet, it is known that between 1809 and 1813 it was

⁵Saluda Association Records (Microfilm) 1808, 7. In possession of Furman University Library. Hereinafter cited as "Saluda Association Records."

⁶Ibid.

⁷Ibid., 9.

⁸Cathey's Creek Minutes (4 Volumes) I, 12. In possession of Church Clerk. Hereinafter cited as "Cathey's Creek Minutes."

pastorless. Furthermore it had been taken under the supervision of the French Broad Church of Buncombe County. Since being an arm of another church was not acceptable to the membership, it rallied to the support of Elder Benjamin King who, more than any other person, held the membership together. It was he who brought about a reorganization of the church in 1813 and from that time until 1822 served as its pastor.⁹ There were, in this reorganization nine members in addition to Reverend King. By 1820 the church had grown to 37 members but during that year the original church, along with her valuable records, was destroyed by fire. Determination to rebuild was unanimous, but even this unanimity brought new problems. Where should the new church be erected? More than half the membership had moved into Gloucester Township and wanted to locate their new church home there. Other members thought that to abandon the original site would be tantamount to sacrilege. Another problem arose at the same time; some perplexing yet unidentifiable doctrinal dispute appeared. It seemed that the church could not exist without a constant state of uncertainty and crisis. Twenty Gloucesterites petitioned for dismissal so they could establish a church in Gloucester. Records do not indicate whether

⁹Records of Transylvania Baptist Association, 1882, 19. In possession of Wake Forest University Library in the Baptist Collection. Hereinafter cited as "Records of Transylvania Association."

the dismissal was granted; yet they show that they withdrew and established the first branch of the "mother church," New Prospect.¹⁰

Once again Elder King called the remnants together and reorganized Cathey's Creek. This time, 1820, there were twenty-eight remaining in the original church. Valiantly he sought to restore it to full fellowship with other churches. Saluda Association Records show, through correspondence, that in 1813 and again in 1820 Cathey's Creek sought to rejoin that Association, but there is no indication that its request was granted.¹¹ French Broad records show that the Church was associated with the French Broad Association from 1813 to 1820.¹² Between 1820 and 1841, Cathey's Creek was a member in full fellowship with the Twelve Mile Association,¹³ and was in the Salem Association from 1841 until 1848.¹⁴

¹⁰Cathey's Creek Minutes, I, 5.

¹¹Saluda Association Records, 1820, 8.

¹²French Broad Association Records, 1822, 12. In possession of Wake Forest University Library in the Baptist Collection. Hereinafter cited as "French Broad Association Records."

¹³Twelve Mile Association Records, 1821, 12. In possession of Furman University Library. Hereinafter cited as "Twelve Mile Association Records."

¹⁴Salem Association Records (Microfilm) 1841, 16. In possession of Furman University Library. Hereinafter cited as "Salem Association Records."

After the original church had burned in 1820, another log structure was built within a year, but by 1830 the church had grown so much that the building was inadequate. The membership, consequently, erected another sanctuary. This building was the first frame church building in Transylvania County. Benjamin Wilson, who owned the first sawmill in the area, cut the timber for its construction.

During the 1840's settlers were spreading over Hogback, Gloucester, and Eastatoe Townships. Each new settlement separated members farther from their church and made them determined to build a nearer church. It was necessary to do so, for disciplinary measures were taken by the church against any adult who missed church more than one successive Sunday. Each separating group sought dismissal and organization as an arm. Each time such petition was granted. One year, 1840, witnessed two such groups secure dismissals and establish arms with mission status. One such group founded a mission on the east fork of the French Broad River in Eastatoe Township; the other formed in distant Gloucester. The former became East Fork Baptist with seventeen¹⁵ and the latter became Macedonia Baptist with twenty-six charter members.¹⁶

¹⁵East Fork Minutes, (3 Volumes) I, 2. In possession of Church Clerk. Hereinafter cited as "East Fork Minutes."

¹⁶Macedonia Minutes, (3 Volumes) I, 3. In possession of Church Clerk. Hereinafter cited as "Macedonia Minutes."

Despite these withdrawals, Cathey's Creek grew and expanded its contribution to its missions and to associational work. Controversy soon arose within the church over the slavery issue. There is some indication that slavery was one reason, in addition to distance, that led to the withdrawals of Macedonia and East Fork. In any case, no slaveholder went to East Fork or to Macedonia. Non-slaveholders did not want their sermons and business meetings cluttered with defense or criticism of slavery.¹⁷ As Baptist growth continued by this fissionary process, another mission grew out of Cathey's Creek in 1848. This mission, Bethlehem, was formed in Brevard Township across from the present Silversteen Home, on the corner of West Main and Park Avenue. This log structure was the mother of Brevard First and of Glady Branch Churches.¹⁸

As did all churches in the area, Cathey's Creek was plunged into an almost chaotic state during the late 1850's. All churches in western Henderson County were torn by the slavery controversy. Many churches found it difficult, or impossible, to keep pastors, because they too contributed to the confusion by siding with one or another group within

¹⁷East Fork Minutes, I, 8.

¹⁸Glady Branch Minutes, (2 Volumes) I, 12. In possession of the Church Clerk. Hereinafter cited as "Glady Branch Minutes."

the church. Cathey's Creek operated under such circumstances, securing whenever she could interim pastors from other denominations. Baptist churches were not alone in this condition. Methodists and Presbyterians were torn asunder by the slavery controversy; and Episcopalians, who were summer residents, held no services during three quarters of the year. Reverend James Stuart Hanckle, Episcopal rector of proud St. Paul's in the Valley, not only filled his pulpit during summers, but filled in for Baptists, Methodists, and Presbyterians and their churches.¹⁹ The skeletonized churches operated against tremendous odds. Their memberships were on one or the other side of the Civil War. What had happened to the spiritual community? Pastors were members of certain of these bands. As was mentioned in another section of this paper, Edward Allison, a Baptist minister from Transylvania County, was a member of one of them. He was not alone; other unnamed ministers supported the same groups.

Before the Civil War Negro members had been encouraged to worship and to participate in church activities. During the war there were often more Negro members than white members present. For two decades some Negroes had been worshipping separately from their masters though they had no separate churches. As soon as the war was over twenty-five

¹⁹Cathey's Creek Minutes, II, 15.

of them moved out as a body and established another branch of Cathey's Creek. They named their church Bethel.²⁰

There was such general disorder during the War that much uncertainty surrounds the formation of such churches as Shoal Creek, Whitewater, Glady Branch, Old Toxaway, Carson's Creek and Zion. Two of these, Old Toxaway and Glady Branch, were off-shoots of Cathey's Creek.²¹

Earlier in this chapter reference was made to general areas of Baptist settlement in Transylvania County. One of these areas was in South Little River. It was here, near Cedar Mountain, that Blue Ridge Baptist Church was born in 1836. Conflicting narratives tell that her members came from churches within the neighboring South Carolina Associations or that they came from Cathey's Creek. Most of her records were burned when the original log structure was burned in 1850. Records show that the original members were Joseph Burns and Joseph Shipman and their families. They also show that Joseph Burns gave the original site for the church.²² This old church was a member of the French Broad Association

²⁰Bethel Church Minutes (2 Volumes) I, 7. In possession of the Church Clerk. Hereinafter cited as "Bethel Church Minutes."

²¹Glady Branch Minutes, I, 12.

²²Church Bible (Record section) Blue Ridge Church. In Blue Ridge Church.

and successively of the Salem, the Transylvania Associations, and finally the Carolina and Transylvania County Associations.²³

For five years after their church building burned, the members gathered under an old arbor during summers and in homes of members during winters. Under such circumstances, taking into consideration the disturbances of the time, the group rarely met. In 1855 their second structure, this time a frame building, was completed. It too was burned just before the Civil War under mysterious circumstances.

Those twenty-six members who constituted Macedonia Baptist chose Reverend Robert Jordan, who had been pastor of the "mother" church, to be their first pastor. During the quarter century between their separation and the Civil War they differed from their parent church on fundamental issues. They were more closely related to the particularistic doctrines than to those of the general or separate Baptists.

The one remaining principal pocket of Baptists was that in Little River. There they settled Transylvania's chief thoroughfare between South Carolina and Western North Carolina. Little River Baptist Church was separate from other Baptists in Transylvania because she was from Beulah, in present Henderson County, and never associated closely with churches

²³Records of Transylvania Association, 1820, 13. In possession of C. W. Henderson, Oak Grove. Hereinafter cited as "Records of Transylvania Association."

to the west of her. She was first a mission of Beulah and it was from that church that her white and black members came. Here, too, original separation from the parent was aided by distance. Church discipline was even more vigorously enforced than it was at Cathey's Creek.

Baptists, Methodists, and Presbyterians, jointly secured three-fourths of an acre of land from Charles Barnett on September 10, 1837. All three denominations were to cooperatively build a building to be used as a sanctuary and school house. Times of worship were allocated, so that conflicts would not occur. No preacher who was not acceptable to his particular faith could preach.

This arrangement did not last. The Baptists withdrew and began their own church. They then petitioned that their mission status be changed to church status. On October 6, 1836, Little River was granted such status and became a member of Bethel Association. On the third Sunday of November in 1836, the church was organized with thirty-eight members and Reverend James Blythe as pastor. Blythe had been ordained on the first Sunday in July, 1837, "We the church of Beulah do agree to loose the hands of Brother James Blythe and let him go and preach the Gospel wherever he is called to preach."²⁴

²⁴W. Earnest Merrill, "Little River Church Centennial," Transylvania Times (Brevard, North Carolina) September 9, 1938, 1.

For a decade the church grew but then it split over the slavery issue and doctrinal differences. The dispute over slavery was between those few who believed that the Bible sanctioned slavery and those who held that slavery was immoral and that church membership implied full brotherhood and negated such a system of slavery. Such doctrinal differences as there were may be attributable to Reverend James Bond who regarded the last day of the week as the true Sabbath. For such heretical beliefs he and his thirty-five associates were expelled from the church. They formed a short-lived Adventist-type church which was called the Bondite Church. This separation left only eleven members in Little River. The original grant of land for the church site had stipulated that possession depended upon a belief in free will and in general atonement. Though the church had no pastor between 1851 and 1857, its membership grew from 11 to 118. Nevertheless, this church too was struck by the Civil War. Some of its members were among those who worked ardously for Union victory.²⁵ Others of her members were in all the various Confederate, Federal, and irregular units operating in the area.

As has been explained throughout this paper, Baptists have always striven to erect their own sanctuaries. Yet, they usually began,

²⁵Ibid., 3.

especially early churches like Little River, Cathey's Creek, and Blue Ridge, by sharing sanctuaries and even ministers with other denominations. From 1772 until the concluding years of his diary, Bishop Asbury alludes to this practice. Though he was not Baptist and was often unsympathetic with them, he praises Baptist tenacity to their principles and Methodist convictions as well. Several instances are here inserted for two reasons: to point out the presence of Baptists during his time and to give examples of Baptist relations with other denominations. On one occasion he said, "I preached in a Baptist meeting house and was kindly received."²⁶ On another occasion he wrote, "I had many people, Baptists and others, though but little comfort in my soul."²⁷ Again, "Many people attended preaching at Mr. Sinclair's among whom were some Baptists, who went away displeased.... There are some Baptists here who oppose the work under us, and perplex and trouble our young beginners, though they let me alone."²⁸

²⁶Elmer T. Clark, J. Manning Potts, and Jacob S. Payton (eds.) The Journals and Letters of Francis Asbury, 3 Volumes (London: Epworth Press, 1958) I, 25.

²⁷Ibid., 32.

²⁸Ibid., 52.

Though the scope of this thesis ends in 1865, it might be appropriate to say that their Baptist church census indicates that it is still increasing faster than other protestant denominations.

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